Kalki, the Prophet, and the Oneness of God: An Anthropological and Perennial Study of the Final Avatar and Prophet Muhammad

By Jayanantaka

Introduction: Avatar and Prophet — Two Languages for One Reality

Throughout human spiritual history, the concept of *prophet* in Semitic traditions and *avatar* in Indian traditions may seem distinct in terminology, yet they ultimately refer to the same phenomenon: the manifestation of a divine envoy to restore moral and spiritual order.

From the perspective of the **anthropology of religion**, both concepts arise within different cultural contexts—Arabia with its Semitic monotheism, and India with its symbol-rich Vedic theosophy—but share a common social and spiritual function: the appearance of a sacred human being who restores cosmic and moral balance.

From a **post-structuralist** lens, *prophet* and *avatar* are linguistic signs for the same signified: divine revelation embodied in human form. Language is not a fixed mirror but a living web of meanings shaped by cultural context. Thus, the *avatar* in India and the *rasūl* (messenger) in Arabia are two linguistic expressions of a single spiritual archetype.

The **sociology of language** perspective reinforces this universality, as the Qur'an declares:

وَمَا أَرْسَلْنَا مِنْ رَسُولٍ إِلَّا بِلِسَانِ قَوْمِهِ لِيُبَيِّنَ لَهُمْ
Wa mā arsalnā min rasūlin illā bilisāni qawmihi liyubayyina lahum.
"We sent not a messenger except in the language of his people, so that he might make (the message) clear to them."
(Qur'an, Surah Ibrāhīm [14]:4)

Thus, revelation always descends in the language of its audience. Viṣṇu manifests an *avatar* in India; Allah sends a *prophet* in Arabia. Both reflect the same anthropological constant: divine revelation incarnated in human language.

Chronology and Variations of the Kalki Narrative

The story of *Kalki Avatar* appears in several *Purāṇas—Vishnu Purāṇa*, *Bhagavata Purāṇa*, *Agni Purāṇa*, and *Kalki Purāṇa*.
Their essential differences can be summarized as follows:

Source Text	Core Narrative	Emphasis
Vishnu Purāṇa (IV.24)	Kalki will be born at the end of Kali Yuga as the son of Viṣṇuyaśas in the village of Shambhala. He rides a white horse and wields a shining sword to destroy evil and restore Dharma.	Moral and religious restoration.

Source Text	Core Narrative	Emphasis
Bhagavata Purāṇa (XII.2.19–20)	Kalki, as Viṣṇu's incarnation, appears when kings become thieves and morality disappears. He ends the Kali Yuga and begins Satya Yuga.	Strong eschatological tone.
Agni Purāṇa (XVI.8–12)	Kalki will recover the lost Vedas and teach the unity of Brahman.	Restorative and revelatory elements.
Kalki Purāṇa (1–3)	Describes the celestial horse Devadatta and the luminous sword from heaven.	Symbolic and apocalyptic.

All these texts were composed in the context of a moral and spiritual decline (Kali Yuga). *Kalki* thus represents the reappearance of the *Paramātma*—the Supreme Self—restoring humanity's awareness of the One God.

Primary Text and Translation

Sanskrit:

कल्किः नाम भविष्यामि भूमिभारहरः प्रभुः।
विष्णुयशस्सुतः श्रीमान् सम्भलग्रामसम्भवः॥

Transliteration:
Kalki nāma bhaviṣyāmi bhūmi-bhāra-haraḥ prabhuḥ, Viṣṇuyaśas-sutah śrīmān sambhalagrāma-sambhavaḥ.

Translation:
"I shall appear as Kalki, the Lord who removes the burden of the earth, the noble son of Viṣṇuyaśas, born in the village of Shambhala."

This depicts a spiritual savior whose mission is to abolish idolatry and restore monotheistic faith — a vision closely aligned with the historical mission of the prophets.

Paramātma and Monotheism in the Vedas

The **Vedas** contain clear affirmations of the unity of God:

Ekam sat viprā bahudhā vadanti —
"Truth is one; the wise call it by many names."
(Ṛg Veda 1.164.46)

And the **Śvetāśvatara Upanishad (6.11)** declares:

Eko devaḥ sarva-bhūteṣu gūḍhaḥ —
"The One God is hidden within all beings."

The Vedas emphasize a formless, all-pervading divine reality. This is the basis of **Vedic monotheism**, personified as *Paramātma* — the Supreme Soul. The mission of Kalki is thus seen as the restoration of this ancient principle of divine unity.

The Oneness of God in the Qur'an

Islam asserts divine unity in its most absolute form through *Sūrat al-Ikhlāṣ*:

قُلْ هُوَ اللّٰهُ اَحَدٌ ۝ اَللّٰهُ الصَّمَدُ ۝ لَمْ يَلِدْ وَلَمْ يُوْلَدْ ۝ وَلَمْ يَكُنْ لَّهٗ كُفُوًا اَحَدٌ
Qul huwa Allāhu Aḥad, Allāhu ṣ-Ṣamad, lam yalid wa lam yūlad, wa lam yakun lahu kufuwan Aḥad.
(Qur'an, Surah Al-Ikhlāṣ [112]:1–4)

And further reinforced by:

قُلِ ادْعُوا اللّٰهَ اَوِ ادْعُوا الرَّحْمٰنَ ؕ اَيًّا مَّا تَدْعُوْا فَلَهُ الْاَسْمَآءُ الْحُسْنٰى
(Qur'an, Surah Al-Isrā' [17]:110)

"Call upon Allah, or call upon the Most Merciful; whichever name you call, to Him belong the Most Beautiful Names."

These verses affirm that although names differ, the Divine Essence remains one — *Brahman*, *Paramātma*, *Yahweh*, or *Allah* are linguistic variations referring to the same Absolute.

Historical Candidates for Kalki

Figure	**Reason for Identification**	**Evaluation**
Gautama Buddha	Spiritual and moral reformer	Already considered an earlier avatar
Sri Chaitanya	Preached divine love and devotion	Non-esoteric and non-eskatological
Mahatma Gandhi	Preached truth and nonviolence	Ethical, not messianic
Prophet Muhammad ﷺ	Born in the "land of peace" (Makkah), destroyed idols, restored pure monotheism	Fits both symbolic and historical criteria under the perennial framework

---

Symbolic Parallels between Kalki and Muhammad ﷺ

Aspect	**Kalki (Purāṇas)**	**Muhammad ﷺ (Islamic History)**
Place of Origin	Shambhala — "Abode of Peace"	Makkah — *Balad al-Amīn* ("City of Peace")
Father's Name	Viṣṇuyaśas — "Glory of God"	Abdullah — "Servant of God"
Sacred Mount	Mount Kailāsa (spiritual initiation)	Jabal Nūr (Cave of Hira, first revelation)
Sacred Horse	Devadatta (Celestial Horse)	Al-Burāq (Heavenly Mount)
Divine Weapon	Sword forged by Viṣṇu	The Qur'an — "Word of God"

Aspect	Kalki (Purāṇas)	Muhammad ﷺ (Islamic History)
Mission	Destroy idolatry, restore Dharma	Destroy idolatry, establish Tawḥīd
Era	End of Kali Yuga (spiritual darkness)	End of Jahiliyyah (moral ignorance)

Both figures mark the end of an era of ignorance and the dawn of divine light.

Excellent — those two Qur'anic verses are central to the symbolic section of the article, as they capture the **idea of revelation as a divine weapon** (*senjata ilahi*) that transforms and destroys falsehood.

Here is how you can present them in your English version (formatted elegantly for publication, keeping both Arabic and English together):

The Divine Weapon in the Qur'an

لَوْ أَنْزَلْنَا هَٰذَا الْقُرْآنَ عَلَىٰ جَبَلٍ لَرَأَيْتَهُ خَاشِعًا مُتَصَدِّعًا مِنْ خَشْيَةِ اللهِ ۚ وَتِلْكَ الْأَمْثَالُ نَضْرِبُهَا لِلنَّاسِ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَفَكَّرُونَ
(Surah Al-Ḥasyr [59]:21)

"If We had sent down this Qur'an upon a mountain, you would have seen it humbled and rent asunder out of awe for God. These are the parables We set forth for humankind, so that they may reflect."

This verse portrays the **immense spiritual power of divine revelation**, capable of breaking even mountains — a metaphor for human arrogance and rigidity of the heart.

بَلْ نَقْذِفُ بِالْحَقِّ عَلَى الْبَاطِلِ فَيَدْمَغُهُ فَإِذَا هُوَ زَاهِقٌ ۚ وَلَكُمُ الْوَيْلُ مِمَّا تَصِفُونَ
(Surah Al-Anbiyā' [21]:18)

"We hurl the truth against falsehood, and it crushes it, and behold, falsehood perishes. Woe to you for the falsehoods you ascribe!"

Here, the *Word of God* (*Kalam Allah*) is presented as an active, dynamic force — a **cosmic sword** that destroys illusion and restores divine order.
Just as *Kalki's divine sword* (*Divya Khaḍga*) symbolizes moral purification, the Qur'an represents the **light of truth that annihilates darkness**.

Conclusion: The Unity of Revelation and Religious Language

This study concludes that the apparent divide between *avatar* and *prophet* is linguistic, not theological.
Anthropologically, both are universal human archetypes of divine communication.
From a **post-structural** view, the difference is merely semantic — a change in the signifier, not in the signified.

From a **perennial philosophical** view, the divine message is one, expressed in different languages and symbols.

Both *Kalki* and *Muhammad* ﷺ embody the same archetype — restorers of monotheism, bearers of divine justice, and bringers of light to an age of darkness.

As the Vedas proclaim:

"Ekam sat viprā bahudhā vadanti" — "Truth is one; the wise call it by many names."
And as the Qur'an confirms:
"Call upon Allah or call upon the Most Merciful — by whichever name you call Him, His are the most beautiful names." (Al-Isrā' [17]:110)

Thus, the essence of all true religion is one:
to worship the One God — beyond form, beyond likeness, known by many names across the tongues of humanity.

Bibliography

Primary Texts

- *Al-Qur'an al-Karim*, Madinah Mushaf Edition.
- *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*, Canto XII, trans. Bibek Debroy. New Delhi: Penguin Books India, 2019.
- *Vishnu Purāṇa*, trans. H.H. Wilson. London: John Murray, 1840.
- *Kalki Purāṇa*, trans. Manmatha Nath Dutt. Calcutta: Elysium Press, 1905.
- *Ṛg Veda*, trans. Ralph T.H. Griffith. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1896.
- *Śvetāśvatara Upanishad*, ed. Patrick Olivelle. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996.

Secondary Sources

- Eliade, Mircea. *The Sacred and the Profane.* New York: Harcourt Brace, 1959.
- Nasr, Seyyed Hossein. *Knowledge and the Sacred.* Albany: SUNY Press, 1989.
- Schuon, Frithjof. *The Transcendent Unity of Religions.* Wheaton: Theosophical Publishing House, 1953.
- Radhakrishnan, S. *Indian Philosophy*, Vols. I–II. London: George Allen & Unwin, 1951.
- Lings, Martin. *Muhammad: His Life Based on the Earliest Sources.* London: Allen & Unwin, 1983.
- Rahman, Fazlur. *Major Themes of the Qur'an.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980.

Comparative and Modern Studies

- Sharma, Arvind. "The Concept of Avatāra in Hinduism and Its Parallels in Other Religions." *Numen* 30, no. 1 (1983): 57–71.
- Nasr, Seyyed Hossein. "Islam and the Philosophia Perennis." *Studies in Comparative Religion* 1, no. 1 (1967).

- Nicholson, Andrew J. *Unifying Hinduism: Philosophy and Identity in Indian Intellectual History.* New York: Columbia University Press, 2010.
- Ernst, Carl W. “Interpreting the Islamic Heritage in Comparative Perspective.” *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 70, no. 3 (2002): 601–623.